/6 cont./

175 And since the male line of the Abkhaz kings was cut off with the death of the blind king Theodosius II, the Abkhaz kingdom, by right of the closest relation to that house, together with the appanages of the Bagratids of Samtskhe, was united with the Grusian kingdom, and Bagrat III assumed the title of the Grusian and the Abkhaz King. Since that time the Catholicoi of Mtskheta have assumed the title of the Catholicoi "of all Georgia" and sometimes "of all Georgia and Abkhazia." In the florescent period of Grusian history (tenth to twelfth centuries) all Abkhazia and especially its coastal parts were covered with towns, monasteries, churches, and fortified castles. From the end of the ● 177 175 fifteenth century on, i.e. upon the fall of Byzantium and the replacement of the cross in the Hagia Sophia by the crescent, Mohammedanism gradually began to spread in Abkhazia; this trend was further favored by the circumstance that in that same century Georgia, weakened and ruined in the century-old struggle with the Mongols and later with the Persians and Turks, broke up in the fifteenth century into three kingdoms (Kakhetia, Kartlia, and Imeretia) and five principalities (Samtskhe, Svanetia, Mingrelia, Abkhazia, and Guria); moreover, the Turks subjugated Adzharia and began to spread Mohammedanism there. At this time also the Caucasian mountaineers (Lezgi /Lezgin/, Chechen, North Osset, Circassians, and others) renounced Christianity and accepted Mohammedanism. Georgia, surrounded on all sides by Mohammedanism, managed with difficulty to preserve her religion, but weak and small Abkhazia was unable to do so; Mohammedan doctrine spread widely there and would have completely swallowed up Christianity if the Georgians had not in good time called the Colossus of the North to the defense of all the ancient aborigines of the Caucasus.

127 In the compilation of the present ethnographical sketch of Abkhazia, the author has used as source-material and texts the following articles by Abkhazians: 1. "Abkhaziya i Abkhaztsy /Abkhazia and the Abkhaz/," an ethnographical sketch by P. Giorgidze, published in Iveriia, 1888; 2. "Abkhaziya," /7/ an ethnographical sketch by K. Madchavariani, in the newspaper

/14 cont./

folk-poetry of the Abkhaz are extremely meager. Their only musical instrument is the achangur, a balalaika, and even this has been borrowed (to judge from the name) from the Grusians (Grusian: chonguri). Abkhaz versification for the most part is governed by alliteration. Examples:

Varvultu --- barfuntu

Chilar marda qulardam

Arba arba sinarba

Masta mastarou

Masta stakhou

Siamul utsa

Siamul siakhou

Siandzhar utsa.

/15/

II.

Home-life of the Abkhaz -- Family -- Position of Women.

The whole domestic life of the Abkhaz is arranged so unpretentiously that all the necessary household articles, with the exception of iron things, are produced by the Abkhaz himself from materials which are at hand. The smith's trade, which requires a certain special technical knowledge, is left in the hands of special craftsmen. In every village there are two or three blacksmiths who will produce anything the Abkhaz needs from a piece of iron which he gives them. The smiths are highly regarded by the community and their craft itself has sacred significance in the eyes of the Abkhaz.

Trading is considered a shameful occupation, and the Abkhaz therefore do not engage in it, but if it were developed, the Abkhaz could sell many things at a profit. For instance, the Abkhaz women, who, by the way, are great masters of all kinds of home crafts, produce from sheep and goat skins the

A 181 [751 cont.] Abkhaz are similarly endowed, but are distinguished from the former by greater irritability, instability, garrulity, politeness, and, like the Mingrel, are notorious thieves. [Fig. 442 appears here.]

A 101 [621] [619] The Abkhaz now consist of 24 or 25 kin groups or communities; as tribes, the following have been mentioned earlier: the Ubykh between Khamise and Shakhe, the Abadzekh between Pshekups and Byelaya, the Dzhigeth between Shakhe and Mzymta; farther south up to the Bzyb, the Bzubb, up to the Kodor, the true Abkhaz, and in their hinterland the Tsebeldin; up to the Galisga, the Abshav and, bordering on Mingrelia, the Samurzakhan.

A 89 177 [302] Dress. The Abkhaz women wear Cherkess, or nowadays usually European, clothing (see Fig. 443), the men the Cherkess coat (see Fig. 441); they usually shave the head bare.

C 291 A [497] The Cherkess attire for men has spread widely among the Cossacks and [752] [Fig. 443 appears here] through all of Caucasia as far as the lowland Georgians in the south, and the women's attire has been adopted by the neighboring Abkhaz, Karachai, and Osset. The men's costume (see Fig. 442) consists of a short (yana) of white linen or red taffeta, baggy pants, a silk embroidered undergarment with a collar, a long robe (tsié) open at the chest, made of black or gray cloth, with cartridge pockets (khazyr) on the breast, narrow belt strap, leather leggings, sandals of leather or linden bark, cap (papakh) of white or black sheepskin (see Fig. 444), and in addition, for bad weather, a black coat (tsauka, burka) of goat and sheep wool, with a hood (g'etapt) that is draped around in such a manner

C 302 that the right arm remains free. They cut their hair off short, leaving only a braided tuft (haidar). Out-of-doors they carry

C 411 a dagger (kama, see Fig. 449) on the belt, and from a sword-belt they hang a saber, the blade of which is often Damascus, Khorassan, Hungarian, or Lezgin work and which is often inlayed

C [439] [495] with silver or gold on a black background, as are also the studs of the horse's harness and other parts of the armament. This further consists of: pistol (see Fig. 450), flintlock rifle with

[753 cont.]
silver and gold studs, shoes of soft leather and gold or silver embroidered, pointed overshoes with thick soles and high heels, on the head a 15-centimeter-high conical cap of silk richly ornamented with gold and silver lace, buttons, plates, and chains, and finally a white interwoven veil which hangs far down from the cap. The braid of hair is entwined with white stripes of

Fig. 445. Cherkess fully armed, with Woman and Girl. Domed tents in background. (From Spencer, 1837.)

cotton that hang down to the feet. Under the shirt the girls always wear a tight bodice of leather that is not taken off until the wedding.

Dwelling. The farmsteads of the Abkhaz do not lie next to one another as in a village, but are widely scattered and hidden in the dense tree-growth of the gardens in the vicinity of a spring or brook. The newer houses are [754] made of planks on piles, in the style of the Mingrel or Imeretin. The older huts are the most primitive in all the Caucasian forest regions and resemble the huts in the summer encampments of Macedonian shepherds. [Fig. 446 appears here.]

[768 cont.]
only their secondary souls (ap'stsĭtsada) wander about.

Beside their old gods, the Abkhaz worship Christ as the Holy Teacher, Mary, and St. George as the protector of the villages Lykhny (Anan-Lykhnykh), Lsā or Pitzunda (Ana-Lsānykh), and Ylori (Tsminda-Giorgi), to whom a sheep is sacrificed every year, and a calf with notched ears is donated to the churches.

The Cherkess, like the mountain Georgians, had sacred groves and trees, where in former times the public gatherings were held, where raiders found refuge, and where the spoils of the hunt and war and sacrificial offerings were hung. Also individual springs and mountains, certain stone columns (cf. p. 63), and iron and stone crosses were supposed to have been considered sacred.

The sacerdotal duties are performed by selected older men; they lead the prayers and slaughter the sacrificial animals, sheep, lambs, goats, oxen, in the sacred groves before the cross, after having previously singed them on the neck with a pine-torch and poured millet-beer over them (cf. below in Section III, 1b: Cheremis [untranslated]). The head of the animal is hung up on a tree for the god, the priest receives the skin, and the meat is eaten by the believers, who entertain themselves on festival days with feasts, dancing, drinking, races, tournaments, and the like.

[769] The gods of the Cherkess are almost the same as those of the Abkhaz; they have a supreme being (T'ka) who reigns over the heavens; a god of the smiths (Tliebske), the protectors of agriculture (Yemikha, Skus'kha, Naokhatkha); the guardian of the forests (Mezitkh, Mezetkha), who rides on a boar with golden bristles and whose daughters milk the does; the lord of the bees (Merissa or Mereĭme); three sisters who watch over domestic life, warriors in battle, and the traveler on his way; the god of the winds and waters (Seozeres), and others.

At the beginning of spring, a three-day celebration is held in honor of the last god, during which a dry pear-tree hung with garlands and other decorations, with a cheese at the top,

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
Adzvibzha

already collected for the writing of a full-size monograph dealing with the religious beliefs and customs of the K'art's, Ibers, and Svans. However, after some reflection I decided that the time was not ripe for such a task as some necessary data were lacking and I therefore decided to publish only the notes. Here and there, however, I have not been able to restrain myself from touching upon certain considerations and inquiries belonging to the larger plane, and these have overflowed in the form of footnotes.

The founders of Christianity, realizing that it was not so easy after all to eradicate from the consciousness of the majority of the population religious beliefs and rites observed for thousands of years, endeavoured to transform them, by wrapping them up in their own clothing and so adapting them to the Christian feasts and saints; thus they established their own annual festivals. Wherever possible I have followed in my account the established order of church festivals.

I should further point out that all the material herein described was collected in one village only, namely, Adzvibzha, in southern Abkhasia (the province of Abzhua), which, according both to Georgian and foreign (for instance, of the missionary A. Lamberti) historical sources constituted until the second half of the seventeenth century, part of Megrelia. This accounts for the fact that the Megrelian influence is so strongly noticeable. I think it is quite possible that some of the beliefs herein described may be capable of a different interpretation in Northern Abkhasia.

I begin my notes with Àyt'ar. In the first place, however, it will be expedient to explain my views on the chief deity *antswd*,* God.

Antswd is a compound word, consisting of *an*, "mother," and *tswa* (*ratswd*)—"many," which together denote "many mothers" or simply "mothers"; the word is thus in the plural form.[1] "In a formal or grammatical sense," says Dcharaia, "it is not an error; only the word 'mother' forms in the plural *antswa* and 'God'—*antswd*, i.e. the difference is in the accent. But in colloquial speech both words,

* The underlined *tsw* is a trigraph representing a sound uttered with one articulative effort or breath impulse, of which the digraph "*ts*" represents the front lingual affricate equivalent to German "*z*" (*Zeit*, time), and the labial semi-vowel "*w*", the labialization of the preceding "*s*". "*Tsw*" thus represents a labialized variety of "*ts*". See N. Y. Marr, *The Abkhasian Analytical Alphabet* (in Russian), Leningrad, 1926, p. 31. [Translator's Note.]

[1] It would be premature at this stage to enter into the question of the identification of the conception "god", in Abkhasian, with "mother", and any attempt to give a morphological explanation of the form, which is incontestably the plural in *-tswa*, with the aid of the Abkhasian word *ratswa* would be superfluous (see N. Marr, *Definition of the Language of the Second Category of the Achaemenian Cuneiform Inscriptions* (in Russian), in *Zapiski* (Bulletin) of the Eastern Branch of the Imperial Russian Archæological Society, St. Petersburg, 1915, §62. See also his *On the Origin of the Name Anapa* (in Russian). It is the usual linguistic method of the Abkhasians to interpret everything, even suffixes, such as the plural termination *-tswa* in the above instance, by means of the Abkhasian speech, with the aid of the Abkhasian words that survive to this day. [Note by the Editor of the *Kristianskii Vostok*.]

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
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[196] When the woman places the dough on the hearth, she holds over it a
[262] pure *sulguni* (a round of cheese),[1] from the centre of which she cuts out a small round piece and places it in the middle of the maizebread; with the exception of this middle part, the maizebread is lenten. When placing the dough on the hearth, she scatters bits of it, first in the direction of the sea, and then towards the mountains; and, as if calling to the goats, she says, *reyt, reyt* (the goat call), and mutters the following prayer: "Thou, *jabrȧn*, the great part of the great
[539] god (*Ȧyt'ar intswakhwodȧ jabrȧn*)! Grant us the warmth of thine eyes and of thy heart. Be the guardian of our herds! Bear goodwill unto us so that no harm should befall our herds, except their old moulted wool and old dung!" Apart from this introduction, which is always used, each says an improvised prayer. After this is over, as if calling to the goats they again exclaim, *reyt, reyt*, turning alternatively towards the sea and the mountains.

When the maizebread is baked, and the goats have returned from the fields, the eldest man in the family prays to god *jabrȧn*, muttering approximately the formula quoted above. The whole family joins him in uttering *dămon*, and the candles are lighted.

It is to be noted that during the prayer the participants also invoke the "god" *mkyamgaria*,* and say: "May thy bounty never fall short
[197] on us." It seems to me that this deity is no other than the "Megre-
[196] lianized" angels Michael and Gabriel (Geo. *Mik'el da Gabrieli*), with whom Christianity endeavoured, in vain, to replace Ȧyt'ar and his "parts" of gods; up to this day the pagan deities still take precedence, although they also pray to *mkyamgaria*.

The maizebread is first cut into four parts with two strokes of the knife, and only afterwards into small pieces; the neighbours
[221] are not forgotten either, a piece being sent to each. The maizebread
[350] is baked in rhododendron (*ȧ-k'wazhwa*)† leaves.

2. *Zhwabrȧn* (god of cows)[2]

[196] This rite is performed in the same manner as jabrȧn. The prayer begins thus: "Thou *zhwabrȧn*, the great part (of the great deity)

104 * The palatal or mid-lingual semi-vowel "*y*" in "*k'y*", "*gy*", as also in "*ky*", "*ny*", "*shy*", "*qy*", etc., met with in this article, lingualizes or iotises the preceding consonant sound, the combinations "*k'y*", "*gy*", etc, representing lingualized or iotised varieties of "*k'*", "*g*" (pronounced hard, as in "go"), etc. For the pronunciation of simple radical sounds see p. 328. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

† See p. 131, note *.

[1] In Abkhasian *tshyashwa*, pure cheese; cf. Megrelian (I. Kipshidze, *The Megrelo-Russian Dictionary*, s.v. *asi'ari*) *tsh'obva*, which is also an Abkhasian expression, denoting "pure (*a-tsh'ya*), good (*ȧ-ba*)".

[2] In Guria this observance is known under the name of *boulobe* (an abstract form of *bouli*, cowhouse) or *ilorobe*; the latter probably has some connection with St. George of Ilori. The Gurians often call a cow *ilora*. In Megrelia the god of cattle-breeding is known as *Zhini-Ant'ar*.
[191]

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
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6. *Akhyò Zoshàn*

The Abkhasians ascribe diseases generally to supernatural influences or gods, but some diseases have their own special gods. The god of small-pox, for example, is *Akhyò Zoshàn* (the golden Zoskhan), and also his consort, the goddess *Khanla Shkwdkwa* (Khania the white). How important are the gods of the Abkhasians may be judged from the following circumstance which took place during the spring of 1914 in one of the settlements of the village Jgerdi. Throughout the winter and spring of the year Abkhasia was in the grip of a severe epidemic of small-pox. In order to check the spread of the disease vaccinators were sent to the affected areas. The following account of what happened was described to me by P. Janashia, one of the vaccinators. A certain settlement, fearing that the gods might wreak vengeance upon them, refused to admit the vaccinators; they preferred to safeguard themselves against this terrible disease, *atswarp'shdzà* (small-pox), by the adoption of the gods. *Atswà* denotes skin, rind, and *ap'shdzà*, pretty, beautiful; the whole, in translation, denoting "that which decorates (beautifies) the skin".

By pooling their resources, the settlement raised enough money to buy a couple of snow-white goats and a sufficiency of provisions, and made an expedition into the forest. Here, amidst the quietude and peace of over-hanging leaves, a sumptuous feast was prepared for the divine guests. When everything was ready, and the victim had been placed, according to custom, on *ashwamhyaàt'*, the head of the settlement said the prayer and made the offering to the gods. Nearby stood two bedsteads, adorned with silk bedclothes, on which sat two young women, an *azauri* and a peasant woman; their naked breasts were covered with silk handkerchiefs. The whole assembly knelt down, while the head of the settlement implored the gods to accept their offering by kissing the breasts of the most beautiful women of the settlement, and thus become, in accordance with the ancestral custom, adopted sons of the settlement. Near the "foster-mothers of gods" stood two of the finest horses, one with a side saddle. The sumptuous feast followed the ceremony of adoption, and afterwards the people, holding the horses by the bridle, on which were to be riding the newly adopted gods, *Akhyò Zoshàn* and *Khanla Shkwdkwa*, escorted the precious guests to the accompaniment of song, far away from the settlement. Thus they "turned away", or warded off, the small-pox.

"You may not believe it," an Abkhaz from the settlement told me, "but this 'adoption' saved us from the small-pox; not one of us fell a victim to it. You, the learned, have caused our ruin by bringing down upon us the anger of the gods of our fathers," he concluded, with a deep sigh.